

## **“Transition at Work”**

### **Guide for transgender employees**

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At the beginning stages of disclosure, or ‘coming out’ process, many people may have a lot of internal conflict as to whether or not to disclose. If the person decides to disclose the question arises how to most effectively disclose this process at work. Many wonder who they should tell first: the company’s Human Resource manager? A direct line manager? Or a close colleague? One of the most important considerations when disclosing your transgender identity is safety. Due to the real threat of harassment and violence, benefits and risks of disclosure should be analysed.

Some benefits of disclosure may include:

- Feelings of living a more authentic life
- Reducing the stress of hiding gender identity
- Developing closer and more genuine relationships with colleagues, clients and superiors
- Increase in self-esteem and identity formation
- Becoming a role model for others

Some risks associate with disclosure may include:

- Lack of understanding or acceptance from colleagues, clients or management
- Negative changes in self confidence and state of mind should the above occur
- These relationships may experience permanent unconstructive change
- You may become the focus of office gossip
- You may experience transphobia, harassment, discrimination or violence (illegal)
- You may lose your job (illegal)

### **Sample “Transition at Work” Process:**

1. Familiarise yourself with your rights and the relevant legislature. Discrimination based on gender is prohibited under Labour Relations Act 1995, Employment Equity Act 1998 and the South African Constitution. Also know who to contact for additional information, support or referral to various resources<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Gender Dynamix – [www.genderdynamix.org.za](http://www.genderdynamix.org.za)

SHE - <http://transfeminists.org/who-is-she/mission/>

TIA - <http://www.transgenderintersexafrika.co.za/home>

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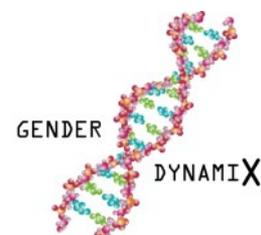
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Gender Dynamix is a Human Rights organisation promoting freedom of expression of gender identity, focussing on transgender and transsexual issues.



2. Inform Human Resources (HR) and explain the situation, in order to begin working on a transition plan. It is advisable to also inform HR of possible pitfalls in terms of discriminatory behaviour from colleagues and what is required of the company/organisation in such a case.
3. Inform direct supervisor and state that HR is supportive and will ensure transition plan is developed.
4. Get the support of the rest of the management team. Ensuring everyone is aware of the transition and what the process, in terms of work related changes, entails and actions that will help alleviate confusion and miscommunication.
5. Inform colleagues. This can be done through information sessions or sensitisation training, depending on what is more appropriate for your organisation or company.
6. Discuss and prepare for practicalities, such as date of return to work within appropriate gender expression (if applicable) and use of appropriate name (email, business cards and so forth), pronouns/title, documents, toilets, uniforms (if applicable) etc.
7. Discuss the ways that management can support the person's transition with regards to medical insurance issues.
8. Ensure that HR organises with staff who do not have direct contact with you but who work with your documents, such as the finance department, understand that the chosen name and name on your ID documents may be different and they should keep this confidential just as they would your earnings.